AT CHRISTMASTIDE COME SIX COMEDIES IN SEARCH OF AN AUDIENCE

T. Powers recently turned over to posterity when he left the cast.

"Barnum Was Right," having been rewritten, will take out its second papers at Washington, D. C., on New Year's Eve, and Louis F. Werba expects to prove that Werba was right.

"Virginia," with Tessa Kosta, weighed anchor at Wilmington last Friday, piloted by the Shuberts. "The Sporting Thing to Do," with Emily Stevens, will take Atlantic City into its confidence on January 15, and Thompson Buchanan, the author, is in town from California to feel all the pangs of a proud father.

Arnold Daly is at present rehearsing a new play, name and pedigree unknown.

Thomas J. Fallon, who dramatized "The Last Warning," has written another play—one of seventeen, he frankly admits. This one is called "The Noose," and it will soon be ready to snare patronage. It will not be presented by Goldreyer and Mindlin, but will be produced by a firm called Capfalls Productions, with the author as one of his own backers.

The next Goldreyer and Mindlin production will be Christine Norman's new play, though as a matter of strict chronology it should be said they have just completed their second production—refurnishing their new offices in the best Belasco manner. Miss Norman's husband, a well known lawyer, was previously thought to be behind it, but Miss Norman writes in, with a spirit of commendable restraint, that this is the first time he has ever been accused of being an angel. While she pleads guilty of having sold it to Mike and Mike through Sanger and Jordan, she exonerates herself of all suspicion of starring in it.

Goldreyer and Mindlin recently turned down an offer of $60,000 for the film rights of "The Last Warning," doing it without holding their breath. They prefer to wait till it has exhausted its stage run—and the film market may be higher.

Anne Morrison, one of the principal players in the Boston company of "The Bat," has written a play, "How Much Do You Love Me?" which is now in the hands of John Golden. It was earlier submitted to David Belasco, but he cordially and benignly declined it. Some time ago it was tested in the fire of Toronto by a stock company. Most of the members of this company of "The Bat," by the way, seem to have a streak of playwriting in them. They have all written plays or vaudeville sketches, and even the electrician composed a piece called "The Gorilla," which is bound to be produced this season.

Incidentally another company of "The Bat" has been one of the few shows that have been cleaning up in the arid regions of the Southwest. It is nothing for it to do $3,000 a night in the one night stands, and it can yank $16,000 across the counter for the week without turning a hair.

"Blossom Time" will be a Christmas present for Syracuse, the company being booked there for a return engagement, since it has now been discovered that Schubert's music is popular.

"Lilliom," it now develops, is being sent on the road by the Shuberts, and is reported to have been the most prosperous of all the Theater Guild productions which left the shelter of New York.

"The Blackmailers," with which Wilmer and Vincent will signalize their return to the first line theaters at Easton on January 8, was written by Barry Connors, and Claiborne Foster and Hal Crane will be consumed with emotion in the leading roles. After four weeks of setting up exercises on the road this melodrama comes to New York, where the producers are already casting sheep's eyes at a couple of theaters.

An interesting situation has developed in connection with "Listening In." B. S. Moss is said to be the chief backer of this play. Moss is one of the leading figures associated with the B. F. Keith circuit. The Keith circuit is competing with the Shuberts for attention in vaudeville. The Shuberts control the Bijou Theater. "Listening In" is at the Bijou.

Random Notes on Shylock

By DAVID BELASCO.

ALL my life I have desired and purposed to produce the plays of Shakespeare. They were the chief part of my earliest study, and my love for them increased with my years. In youth it was my frequent privilege to see many of the best actors our stage has known in their finest Shakespearean embodiments, and sometimes, personating minor characters, to act in association with them. The first words I ever spoke in the theater were words of Shakespeare—those of the little *Richard, Duke of York*, in "King Richard III.," a part which, in childhood, I played at the old Theater Royal in Victoria, B. C., with the famous Charles Kean and Ellen Tree, his wife.

Year by year my familiarity with the best Shakespearean acting increased. Walter Montgomery (idol of my boyhood) as *Marc Antony, Benedick* and *Hotspur;* John McCullough as *Brutus, Falconbridge* and *Lear;* Lawrence Barrett as *Hamlet, Iago* and *Cassius;* Barry Sullivan as *Richard the Third, Othello* and *Macbeth;* Adelaide Neilson as *Juliet, Viola* and *Imogen;* Edwin Booth as *Othello, Iago, Hamlet, Richard, Macbeth* and *Brutus*—those and many others like to those, were objects of my constant and admiring study. Among the plays of Shakespeare in which I appeared during my theatrical novitiate, and which then were acted under my stage management—some of them many times—were "Hamlet," "King Richard III," "Othello," "Romeo and Juliet," "Julius Caesar," "Macbeth," "King John," "King Lear," "Coriolanus," "Cymbeline," "Measure for Measure," "The Comedy of Errors," "Much Ado About Nothing," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "The Taming of the Shrew," "As You Like It," "Twelfth Night" and "The Merchant of Venice." Among the great players of *Shylock* for whom it has been my fortune to direct the stage and to rehearse the immortal drama of which he is the central and pervasive figure are McCullough, Barrett, Sullivan, Booth and—by no means least—William E. Sheridan. In various early barnstorming ventures of my own I indulged my dominant desire and presented "The Merchant" and some other of the bard's great plays, with, be it said, a simplicity of scenic investiture which would cause productions made "in the Elizabethan manner" to appear as lavishly overloaded with ornament! But such juvenile endeavors do not count; and circumstances have not, until now, permitted me really to begin fulfillment of my ambitious purpose, which I do with this oft postponed, but at last accomplished revival of "The Merchant of Venice," in which it is my privilege to present the leader of the American stage, my dear friend, Mr. David Warfield, in one of the most exacting of test parts. In Shakespeare's own words, "Joy be the consequence!"

It is my earnest purpose to follow this revival with presentments of many other great plays of Shakespeare—among them "King Lear," with Mr. Warfield as the heartbroken and the heart breaking monarch of misery; "Romeo and Juliet," "King Henry V.," "Julius Caesar," "Twelfth Night" and a trilogy comprising "King Richard II." and the first and second parts of "King Henry IV." The last named three plays were in great part arranged for my presentation by my friend the late William Winter, to whom I was, at the time of his lamented death, under promise to produce them. They shall be brought forth as soon as it is possible for me to do so.

* * *

In a matter so largely one of taste there never can be universal accord; and to the end of time there will be divergent ideas of adequacy in the setting of Shakespeare. Ever since Charles Kean, for example, began his series of sumptuous revivals of Shakespeare at the Old Princess Theater, London, with "King John"—February 9, 1852—there has been a wail of clamorous complaint about "overloading Shakespeare with scenery" and an outcry as to the need of reverting, in Shakespearean revivals, to "the original text."

It is, of course, to be conceded that neither the plays of Shakespeare nor those of any other dramatist should be "overloaded" with scenery. Also, it is conceded that where a clear, consistent, dramatic "original text" exists it should, as far as possible, be adhered to.

In this matter the first disagreement must necessarily come over the question of what constitutes scenic overloading. Shall we have the stage practically bare? Or, shall we have it so, to represent as closely as possible the scenes specified? A very small minority of the theatergoing public, which enjoys mere rhetoric and declamation, approves presentation of plays upon stages almost barren and most insufficiently illumined. The immense majority of that public, upon the other hand, prefers and demands (and therein reasonable and right) representations designed to create illusions: representations wherein actors, impersonating and interpreting character, are required to "suit the word to the action, the action to the word," and wherein also, stage directors strive to suit the scenic investiture to the indications of time and place and to the dramatic and histrionic needs of plays presented. Yet by the minority, such stage directors are those most often (and most unjustly) censured for "overloading" Shakespeare with scenery.

* * *

The whole long and sometimes acrimonious controversy over proper methods of reviving the plays of Shakespeare upon the stage of to-day (whether in respect to the nature of investiture or the editing of the text) resolves itself into this:

Should a producer utilize all the expedients, devices and improvements which incessant study and continuous scientific discovery and invention have developed during the last three hundred years, or should he (not for a special, educational occasion, but as a permanent policy) throw away ambition, and with it all the advancement that has been made in that long time, and revert to the crude, inferior, wholly inadequate methods which were in vogue (and which were condemned while they were in vogue) during the infancy of the modern theater?

To do the latter, honestly and consistently, we should, among other things, have to banish women from our stage and to have such parts as *Portia, Nerissa* and the amorous *Jessica* represented by "squeaking boys"; to dispense with suitable music and the almost limitless advantages and all the exquisite beauties of electrical lighting; to forego the use of proper make-up (wigs, pigments, &c.); to do away with all adequate scenery, furniture and dressing; to present—for example—"The Merchant of Venice" not in the garb and the environment of the Venice of the sixteenth century, but in the cast off garments of the nobility of Elizabeth's court, and in a rough, semi-barren environment, scarce dignified enough for a bear baiting!

The public certainly would not tolerate such ineptitude in management. Nor is it possible for me to doubt that Shakespeare himself would eagerly have employed all the many invaluable accessories of modern stagecraft if they had been available to him. Therefore, in making this revival of "The Merchant of Venice," what I am sure Shakespeare would have done, what I am sure he would do if he were here to-day, that I have done—and availed myself to the full of all those accessories and aids to effect. But in the doing so I have neither forgotten nor disregarded the study, insight and achievement of three centuries of precedent labor. Thus it will, I trust, be found that, while making innovations such as the lifelong study and experience have suggested, I have neither cumbered the stage with superfluous and hampering embellishments nor disregarded anything valuable in the traditions with which, through generations of genius, this great play has become encrusted.

* * *

Into the controversy as to whether *Shylock* is a monster or a martyr I shall not, here and now, enter. Mr. Warfield's performance is, I am sure, the best essay upon his conception which could be provided. But some singular doctrines concerning the seriousness, I might perhaps say the sincerity, of the character of *Shylock* have, in the coming of time, got themselves accepted. Not long ago, for example I read warm commendation of an actor who presented him as a short, fat, *red haired*, smirking Jew, grotesque and comical. Indeed, of recent years, the assertion that *Shylock* was acted in Shakespeare's day as a red haired, comic character has been so often made that, at last, ignorance has accepted mere itinerant asseveration as truth and this notion has become widely prevalent.

It is a notion both false and preposterous. There is nothing in the character, the conduct, or the experience of *Shylock* that is in the least comic. Nor is there any sufficient ground for assuming and alleging that *Shylock* was ever acted in the presence, or period, of his creator as a comic character. As *Hamlet* is an embodiment of introspective, suffering intellect—*Macbeth* of guilty, conscience scourged ambition—*Lear* of paternal love, outraged and anguished by filial ingratitude—*Iago* of diabolical treachery—so *Shylock* is an embodiment (and a supreme one) of vindictive hatred overreaching and destroying itself in a hideous purpose of revenge. And he is not the less so because in his final discomfiture and utter ruin he is, in some sort, pathetic. There is nothing comic in such a character and experience; there is much that is afflictingly tragic.

Intelligent reading of the text of Shakespeare's play can leave no slightest doubt of the vital, rugged, grim and essentially tragic character of *Shylock*. Here and there, indeed, that text reveals or suggests a momentary, fleeting, grisly jocularity; but any person who can heedfully and apprehensively study it and find in that character anything comic assuredly must possess a most peculiar sense of humor.

Margaret Lawrence in "Secrets" at the Fulton to-morrow night.

The Deluge

MONDAY.

"Rose Briar," starring Billie Burke, at the Empire Theater. Booth Tarkington's comedy, presented by Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., with Allan Dinehart, Frank Conroy, Julia Hoyt and Florence O'Denishawn in her support.

"Secrets," starring Margaret Lawrence, at the Fulton Theater. A play by Rudolf Besier and May Edginton, presented by Sam Harris, with Tom Nesbitt and Frazer Coulter in support.

"The Egotist," starring Leo Ditrichstein, at the Thirty-ninth Street Theater. A "pensive comedy" by Ben Hecht, presented by Lee Shubert, with Maude Hanaford and Maidel Turner in support.

"The Lady Cristilinda," starring Fay Bainter, at the Broadhurst Theater. Monckton Hoffe's play, presented by William Harris, Jr., with Arthur Byron featured and Leslie Howard and Ferdinand Gottschalk in support.

"The Tidings Brought to Mary," at the Garrick Theater. A medieval play by Paul Claudel, French poet, presented by the Theater Guild. Jeanne de Casalis, Helen Westley and Percy Waram in the cast.

"Glory," featuring Patti Harrold, at the Vanderbilt Theater. Book by James Montgomery, music by Maurice de Packin and Harry Tierney, lyrics by James Dyrenforth and Joseph McCarthy. Presented by the Vanderbilt Producing Company.

"Why Not?" at the Forty-eighth Street Theater. Jesse Lynch Williams's comedy, the third production of Equity Players. Jane Grey and Tom Powers in the cast.

"The Clinging Vine," featuring Peggy Wood, at the Knickerbocker Theater. Book by Zelda Sears, music by Harold Levey, presented by Henry Savage.

TUESDAY.

"The Dragon," at the Earl Carroll Theater, for the first of a series of matinees on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons. Lady Gregory's "wonder play," presented by Dudley Digges, with Digges, Lucille Watson and others in the cast.

WEDNESDAY.

"Romeo and Juliet," starring Ethel Barrymore, at the Longacre Theater. Presented by Arthur Hopkins, with McKay Morris as *Romeo*, Basil Sidney as *Mercutio*, Russ Whytal as *Friar Laurence*, Charlotte Granville as *Nurse*, Jerome Lawler as *Reynolio*, Kenneth Hunter as *Tybalt*, William Keightley as *Paris*, Barry Macollum as *Peter*, Barlowe Borland as *Samson*, Albert Reed as *Gregory*, Edwin Brandt as *Escalus*, Howard Merling as *Balthasar*, Basil West as *Montague*, Lenore Chippendale as *Lady Capulet* and Alice John as *Lady Montague*.

An Actor Who Reads

RUDOLPH SCHILDKRAUT is more of a book lover than an actor. This star, who has been acclaimed on the Yiddish and German stages as one of the greatest dramatic exponents of those languages, and who broke into English for the first time at the Provincetown Theater in "The God of Vengeance" on last Tuesday, is such an ardent bibliophile that he has confessed it is often difficult for him to tear himself away from his volumes, even to act his beloved characters.

The two overwhelming loves of his life might be summed up as follows in the order of their importance:

1.—Joseph Schildkraut, his son, of "Lilliom" fame.

2.—His library.

The son needs little introduction. The library is carefully treasured in his apartment on East Twenty-seventh street, between Park and Madison avenues. He brought it with him from abroad, although it consists of several thousand volumes. It is declared by friends to be the most complete theatrical library in New York. Among its quaint possessions is a volume in French entitled, "Monsieur Garrick in His Roles," said to be very rare. It has numerous vignettes in water colors depicting the famous English actor in his various costumes.

There is also much modern literature on the stage. He has all the works by Max Reinhardt, under whom Schildkraut acted for a long time in Berlin. In addition he has books by Percy Mackaye, Gordon Craig, Alexander Woollcott and other authorities. There are other curios not relevant to the footlights. He has a leaf of the first Bible printed in Gothenburg. There is also a copy of the first shilling edition of Charles Dickens' "Dombey and Son."

But though he is loathe to leave these treasures, when he does turn to the stage he does it, one might say, with a vengeance. He is tireless at rehearsal. One day during the early training period of "The God of Vengeance", he kept the company working from 11 to 6, himself being the most indefatigable. Then someone suggested that they take a recess for lunch. Schildkraut looked at him blankly.

"But, my dear sir," he said, "we are rehearsing!"

In addition to his other classical parts he has played so many Shakespearean roles that the inundation of plays by the Bard now threatening must seem to him like Old Home Week. He played "The Merchant of Venice" with Agnes Sorma for a solid year in Berlin under Reinhardt. He has also done *King Lear* and *Caliban*.

One of his priceless memories is that of seeing Edwin Booth playing in Vienna. The American actor played in English, while all the surrounding company spoke German. Schildkraut says that Booth's *"Hamlet"* was absolutely unforgettable. He was so generous in his praise as to declare that Booth was also fine in *King Lear*, one of Schildkraut's favorite roles. That is the quality about Schildkraut that strikes his friends strongly—that he is such a magnanimous artist that he can laud the work of others in the same line.

He attended the Moscow Art Theater as much as he could, and declares they are the last word in acting. Their excellence, he holds, is due not merely to the absolute balance between play and acting, but also between such fine points as the chairs and the doors used in their productions.

Now that he is preparing to use a new medium the veteran actor confesses to an almost callow trepidation. Though he created the leading part in "The God of Vengeance" in Berlin, he says that "his heart is like a stone," and that he feels like a young man going for the first time to a rehearsal.

"WHISPERING WIRES."

While Max Marcin's production of "Mary, Get Your Hair Cut" is expected to domesticate itself soon at the Forty-ninth Street Theater, "Whispering Wires," the present incumbent, will be transferred to another playhouse, so theatergoers will still be assured of their full quota of chills and thrills.

THE SUBWAY CIRCUIT.

MONTAUK THEATER (Brooklyn)—"Just Married," with Vivian Martin and Lynne Overman.

MAJESTIC THEATER—"Molly Darling."

TELLER'S SHUBERT THEATER—"The Cat and the Canary."

SHUBERT'S RIVIERA THEATER (Manhattan)—Marjorie Rambeau in "The Goldfish."

Tales of the Two-a-Day

Vaudeville

CENTRAL—"Hello, Everybody," with Gertrude Hoffman, Harry and Willie Lander, Jean McCoy and Ralph Walton.

PALACE—Irene Franklin, Vivienne Segal and Harry Carroll, the Cansinos, Vera Gordon and the Mosconi Brothers.

RIVERSIDE—The Dolly Sisters, Jack Wilson.

COLONIAL—Pat Rooney and Marion Bent, Ray Raymond.

EIGHTY-FIRST STREET—Doris Humphrey's Dancers, Joe Browning.

BROADWAY—Harry Stoddard and his Shanley Orchestra, Demarest and Collette, Richard Keane, the photoplay, "The Beautiful and Damned."

LOEW'S STATE—Charles F. Strickland and his Boys, Jackie Coogan in the photoplay, "Oliver Twist."

PROCTOR'S FIFTH AVENUE—Elinore and Williams, Original Piano Trio.

PROCTOR'S TWENTY-THIRD STREET—Old Vaudevillian, Angel and Fuller.

PROCTOR'S FIFTY-EIGHTH STREET—"A Dress Rehearsal," Pisano and Landauer.

PROCTOR'S 125TH STREET—Smythe and James, "Indian Reveries."

VAUDEVILLE has its cycles. A veteran of the B. F. Keith circuit was reviewing the current acts that enjoy popularity with the public one day last week and sighed for the Irish comedian with green whiskers, the German comedian of Falstaffian girth and slapstick, the "sidewalk entertainer" with his "rapid fire conversation," the black face song and dance team, the professional strong man, the male quartet, the mystery act, and many another form of entertainment that once flourished on every well made vaudeville bill. Here and there survivors are to be found, but they are exceptionally hardy perennials like the elder Mortons, Houdini, Sam Bernard, Long Tack Sam and others with personalities and methods that defy the changes of taste and fashion. The vaudeville booking man is quick to detect the slightest shifting of values in his entertainments. He changes the old time musical turn into an act with a piano and a singer or else into a tabloid revue. He makes the song and dance team get an elaborate set, well lighted; buy expensive costumes and add ballroom numbers to their repertoire. He takes the minstrels and presents them as everything else but old fashioned black face performers. The musical act has developed into an orchestra, and so on all along the line. The artist in Keith vaudeville who does not change with the times soon finds himself or herself wondering why the bookings are not consecutive. On the other hand ingenuity, imagination, novelty in presentation are immediately rewarded with "time."

There will be a big midnight supper party on New Year's Eve in all B. F. Keith theaters for the artists who play the second show.

The Chestnut Street Opera House, the Philadelphia home of Shubert vaudeville, last week broke away from its customary policy of playing revues, and presented an entire bill of what professionals call "straight vaudeville." Word comes from Philadelphia that the units will probably be interlarded with frequent bills of vaudeville.

The concerts at the Winter Garden have come to be an established fact. But the Winter Garden just now is undergoing extensive alterations and as a consequence is closed. The concerts, however, could not be abandoned and four Sundays ago by means of newspaper ads, placards about the theater and other methods of publicity, the Sunday night Winter Garden crowd was suddenly shunted from the Fiftieth street theater to the Ambassador, just around the corner on Forty-ninth street. But the following Sunday the Ambassador Theater had been rented for a benefit performance. Then came another change and the crowd was transplanted to the Shubert Theater. To-night the show will be resumed at the Ambassador and in a week or so the Winter Garden reopens.

Who's Who

EMMA HAIG, sprightly dancer in "Our Nell," was born in Philadelphia twenty-two years ago. Haig is the family or rightful name. Her father was a musician, her mother an artist; both are dead. Miss Haig has danced since early childhood. She made her debut on the amateur stage at a children's entertainment at the Metropolitan Opera House in Philadelphia when she was eight years old, giving imitations of La Petite Adelaide. Later she went into vaudeville, playing small time.

She was dropped in New Jersey, being appropriately canned in Camden, where the canned music comes from. She didn't mind, as it was just across the river from Philadelphia, and she could get home more easily than most stranded artists. Eventually she made her debut in the legitimate with one of the "Passing Shows" at the Winter Garden. After a turn in vaudeville with a partner she won her musical comedy spurs by appearing in the Ziegfeld "Follies" of 1914, '15 and '16.

The arresting fact is now disclosed that she was the original "September Morn" and set all New York agog with her dimples, disclosed without reserve. Subsequently she went into vaudeville with George White, and later toured as a headliner alone. She was in one of the "Hitchy Koo" productions, and also in "Miss 1917" at the Century Theater. She has also passed the time away in "The Magic Melody" and in the first "Music Box Revue," falling from the stage last June while dancing and breaking her back. After having lain for months in a plaster cast she now shows no effect of the fall.

She has her own racing car and a country home at Great Neck, L. I. She draws and paints, rides horseback, plays golf, and, as you might say, is an athlete.

MY DEAR SIR:

WHO KILLED COCK ROBIN?

To the Dramatic Editor:

Mr. Gilbert Miller, in a letter to you, states that he "had no more to do with the selection of the protagonist of 'The Texas Nightingale' than did the writer of 'The Reviewing Stand,'" that he was in a "unique predicament" upon accepting the play because I insisted upon casting it, and that he had "nothing to say as to its interpretation." This is hardly correct.

The "House of Frohman," knowing that my play had been written for a certain actress, signed a joint contract for both the play and the appearance of that actress in the leading part. If this constituted a "unique predicament," Mr. Miller should never have entered into the project. Aside from this fact I had only the same power of veto over the cast that every writer belonging to the Authors' League ordinarily secures through an Authors' League contract. As for its "interpretation" I do not quite know what Mr. Miller means when he says he had nothing to say about it. All I know is that he said nothing. He never honored us by his presence at a single working rehearsal except one, and that was in Chicago after the opening there. He made some excellent suggestions on that occasion which were followed painstakingly. But during the week before the New York opening, while we were rehearsing every day at the Empire Theater, we did not see him once, not even at the dress rehearsal the night before we opened. Consequently this seems to me a late day for him to wail publicly that the play was "blunted in its performance" However, I believe that he said the same thing to many people while we were still trying to draw audiences to the Empire; so I suppose that one should not be surprised because he has taken the opportunity afforded by your criticism to array himself against his own enterprise—or rather an enterprise of the Charles Frohman, Inc., for which he asserts he is the steward.

What I maintain is that he has "no kick coming," as there was not a member of the cast so stupid that he or she could not have learned anything that Mr. Miller had to teach about the play's "interpretation." And incidentally, the performance of the "protagonist of 'The Texas Nightingale,'" so aroused his enthusiasm in Dayton, where the play was first given, that he announced he was going to star her as soon as the play was produced in New York. This statement was made, not only to me but also to several other people associated with the enterprise.

However, in spite of Mr. Miller's present coldness on the subject of the cast in general, I do not believe that any one blames the acting, for the withdrawal of the play at the Empire. I certainly do not. And I do not believe that the actors blame the play. Neither do I blame the public. Criticism of acting is always largely a matter of personal opinion; and as you yourself say, any positive performance is likely to be the subject of a desperate and definite battle of opinion between critics. But I feel, as I think every other playwright does, that when the value of a play is brought out in such a way as to arouse critical enthusiasm for the piece itself, it is proof that the cast has done excellently in the matter of interpretation. I know I should feel a little ridiculous if I did not admit my own debt to the actors in "The Texas Nightingale" for the skillful and truthful manner in which they "put it over."

And I do not want the serious and intelligent critics who did derive enjoyment from their work, and have acclaimed it almost enthusiastically to think that I feel anything except deep embarrassment when a manager praises my work on one hand and damns their performance on the other. It is, of course, a little amazing, even if Mr. Miller did not concur in the praise bestowed upon "the protagonist of 'The Texas Nightingale,'" in particular, and the production in general, that he did not find it advisable to keep silent; for as a result of his public attack upon these players, I feel that almost any actor might well be afraid to sign a contract with a management given to advertising its dissatisfaction in such a fashion. It must be a bitter aftermath to a personal triumph for an actress to read, after achieving so much acknowledged success in a difficult and unique role, that the management never wanted her to play the part, and now considers her responsible for the death of the play. .....This is really a new danger for artists to ponder on.....Will Mr. Al Woods—if Miss Helen McKeller, for instance, is "panned" by Mr. Woollcott—rush into print to explain that he thinks she deserved it? Or is there any likelihood of the Theater Guild's writing to Mr. Woollcott that they agree with him that "The Lucky One" was neither cast nor produced properly? Or perhaps Mr. Gilbert Miller will get around to writing another letter, telling Mr. Woollcott he was quite right to denounce his father's performance in "La Tendresse" as "catarrhal," but that the "House of Frohman" simply couldn't make him speak up:.....(I thought it a beautiful performance personally, but again, acting is a matter of opinion).

Indeed Mr. Miller's letter opens up a long avenue of speculation. Perhaps Mr. Zukor will even take his pen in hand, . . . but I've no intention of smiling even at my own thoughts, so I will not amuse myself any longer by growing flighty and gay over the very grave and, to my mind, unpardonable precedent set by Mr. Miller. For after all I know quite well that there is no real danger that Mr. Woods or the Theater Guild or any other American manager will follow his example. ZOE AKINS.

NEW YORK, December 20, 1922.

FURTHER TESTIMONY.

To the Dramatic Editor:

Mr. Gilbert Miller's letter of last Sunday is an interesting commentary upon the position of producers in our so-called highly commercialized theater of to-day. If not upon all producers at least upon the firm of Charles Frohman, Inc., of which Mr. Miller is the present director-general in charge of productions.

It seems that "fate and the house of Frohman" were accused of playing havoc with "The Texas Nightingale," whereupon Mr. Miller pleads by way of confession and avoidance to the following effect: The play is a very good play, but unfortunately the producers had no choice of authors—they had to take the one who wrote the play. This done, they had to accept the actors selected by the author who wrote the play, and the interpretations of the characters as conceived by the actors selected by the author who wrote the play, and the stage business necessary to the interpretations of the actors selected by the author who wrote the play, and the settings to fit the stage business necessary to the interpretations of the actors selected by the author who wrote the play, and the costumes—and so on, and so on, down to the quality of the eggs used by Jobyna Howland in the cooking scene. Until Mr. Miller denies any choice in the selection of these eggs we must hold him responsible for them. And, judging from where we sat one night, he apparently isn't a very good person to send to the store for eggs.

If all this be true, as Mr. Miller would suggest, just what, we wonder, do the words "Charles Frohman presents" mean? And what is a producer, anyhow? CHARLES WOOD.

NEW YORK, December 18, 1922.

A CRY FROM THE HEART.

To the Dramatic Editor:

May we beg you to let us know the very first news you may have in regard to Valentino, as to his possible chance of return to the company, or of his plans for the future.

The very great distress felt about him in scores of families, including my own, must be the excuse for this intrusion. We had seen him so many times in each of his pictures—from twenty-five to seventy-five times each one—imagine! We had come to appreciate his unusual genius and rare values as an actor, besides his endless dignity, refinement, grace and charm. He had become an immense influence on our thoughts, and we counted upon its happy continuance when this sudden disaster came. We cannot become reconciled on our own account and for him.

It seems absurd that anything so outside of our own homes and activities should have brought so much unhappiness to so many people. But such indeed is the past.

The suspense of the past three months has told sadly upon nerves and tempers in many circles. In our home, my wife has become blue and nervous. My daughter cries much. Even I, an occupied business man, feel troubled about the affair in business and office hours. It is as if a dear and valued friend were going into bankruptcy, or death, while nothing could be done to help—not even reports of conditions to be had. We all feel the same way and interest is being lost in other entertainments by many.

Dear sir, when you know any facts in this connection, will you not please print a few lines that would mean so much to us all.

A TROUBLED BUSINESS MAN.

NEW YORK, Dec. 17, 1922.

EXEUNT OMNES.

A dramatic incident has just come to light in connection with the closing days of "Virtue," the ill-fated play which flashed across the stage of the Nora Bayes Theater like a comet, that was much more dramatic than anything in the piece itself. On the Friday night just before the play wore itself out there were about seventy-five persons in the audience, huddled together in the orchestra. During the second act one of the spectators arose and made an eloquent impromptu speech, thus:

"Come on, boys, let's all go out together."

"All right," chorused the boys—whereupon the audience trooped out after this Patrick Henry.

Hamlet to the Critics

(With profound apologies to Shakespeare.)

By MONA MORGAN.

WRITE us in, I pray you, as we would have you do it—honestly, from the heart—but if you pad it, as many of your critics do—we'd as lief a callboy wrote for us. Nor do not try to fill your review with wit, but treat all simply, for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of derision, you must acquire and beget a dignity which will make your opinion respected. O! it offends me to the soul to read the puns and witticisms of the so-called critics which tear a play to ribbons, to very rags, to display their talents for writing, which for the most part consists of nothing but an elemental college course from Baker. I would have such a fellow whipped for imitating Nathan; it out-Woollcotts Woollcott; pray you, resist it.

Be not too grave neither, but use your common sense in being clever; suit your mood to the theme, your theme to the mood, with this special proviso, that you o'erlook not the merits of the play, for there be producers who give ye struggling dramatists no chance, whose choice of players is most faulty, which far from holds the mirror up to drama, nor in your sarcastic quips let not the manager escape untouched by your form and pressure. Stint not your praise when talent's in the cast, for the Hopwoods, Shipmans, Thomases can live, Craig, Lash, Simonson, too, will be, no matter what their offense is. O! there be players with famous names who so long have fooled the public that having neither the gait of Christian, pagan nor man, have so spoiled a play I had wondered no nature's highwayman had pulled a gun and shot in self-defense.

O! speak your thoughts unsullied by pull or influence. And let those that would be critics write no more of Booth and Barrett, for there be still those who can well remember them, though in the meantime some necessary question of this century be then to be considered. That's villainous, and shows a most pitiful lack of sense in the fool that draws comparisons. Go—get you a column.

Jeanne de Casalis, who plays *Violaine* in "The Tidings Brought to Mary" at the Garrick.

Lotus Robb as Mozart's *Donna Anna*, one of the several apparitions she must make in the quadruple feminine role of "Johannes Kreisler."